

P. 1.
SERM.

FOUR SERMONS

PREACHED IN THE

CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PETER'S,
MARITZBURG,

BY

THE RIGHT REV. THE LORD BISHOP OF NATAL.

THIRD SERIES: N^{OS.} 16 TO 19.

PRICE ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE.

1867.

A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PETER'S, MARITZBURG,

On Sunday Evening, July 22, 1866,

BY THE

RIGHT REVEREND THE LORD BISHOP OF NATAL.

2 TIM.i.9,10.—*Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.*

IN the earlier ages of the world, we know, almost every event in nature or history, if at all of an extraordinary character, was referred directly to the Divine agency. We in our days, on the other hand, are too apt to look only or chiefly to second causes, and, in studying them alone, to forget that wonderful concurrence of all these differing powers and forces to constitute our fair Universe, which implies the existence not only of an Infinite Power and Wisdom, which has planned and ordered the whole, but of Wisdom *working to an end*. Yet we see this plainly enough on all sides of us in the part more immediately within our notice, namely, our own planet. We see that in the gradual processes through which it has been brought, during the countless ages that are past, into its present condition, one great end, at all events, has been kept in view—one perhaps among many others which are not yet discernible by our limited faculties, but which may hereafter be revealed to us

in another state of being, and afford ever fresh subjects for our wonder and adoration throughout the ages of eternity.

But one thing we do plainly see—one great end for which the earth has passed through its various changes, and that is to form a sphere *fitted for the habitation of just such a creature as Man*. Geology has brought clearly to light in these days the wonderful provision made, in the long ages which elapsed before human history began upon this globe, for the wants of creatures like ourselves. As I have elsewhere written, *Pentateuch, People's Ed.*, p.419,—

Standing on the threshold of this Science, we feel almost overwhelmed, at first, with the awful sense of the enormous lengths of time which have passed, since first the world in which we live was called into being. We obtain from it such an idea of *immeasurable duration*, or what is popularly called *eternity*, as we have never, perhaps, realised before. We look in, as it were, into a dim vaulted chamber, and see arch after arch, reaching away before us, till we can see no farther. We follow, trembling with emotion and dread, through the still solemn halls: all now is hushed in silence there, where for ages after ages innumerable living creatures breathed the pure air or basked in the bright sunlight of other days, long, long before Man lived upon the earth. Still, led by the lamp of Science, we follow on through those wondrous chambers, the walls of which are covered with the relics of the old world's history. And when we have at length stepped on into the gloom, far from the light of day and the converse of our kind, we see the interminable range of arched pillars, stretching out as before, age after age, into the infinite Past.

When we think of these ages full of glory and beauty and life, which have passed away before Man was, and of the very small portion of the Earth's surface—still less of the Earth's thin crust—which we can even see and examine, we cannot presume to say that the whole huge Earth was made only for Man. Yet, if not made *only* for Man, these things have certainly been made, in the Great Creator's scheme, with express and most gracious reference to the wants of Man. The Sun, that millions of years ago gave light and heat, under the influence of which those mighty forests grew in the vast primeval swamps, where the coalbeds were formed, must have shone *with some express reference to such a being as Man*, who should be gifted with intelligence to make use of these stores of hidden treasures, to draw them out of the depths in which they had so long been buried, to turn them to his uses, to extract from them metals and medicines, to obtain from them supplies of light and heat, to contrive the mighty engines that minister so extensively to the comforts of his daily life, and afford the means of intercourse and communion with his fellows. *Who but a creature like Man* could have turned to account the coal, and the lime, and the slate, and the building-stores of various kinds,—the iron, copper, tin, and lead, and a multitude of other substances, mineral and vegetable, which the care of the Creator has provided? Nay, further, we know it has been specially ordained by Divine Wisdom, that the earth's different strata should not lie horizontally, buried one under another at depths inaccessible to human industry. While sand-beds have been slowly formed on sea-beaches, and the very ripple of the tide has been left upon them, and they are pitted all over with small holes formed by the fall of heavy rain-drops driven by the storm, with their edges raised up on the side opposite to that from which the wind then blew,—while this slow work of nature has been going on through countless ages, till the beds of sand buried deep beneath the surface have been hardened into sand-stone,—yet how should Man have made use of these materials, or even known of their existence, if other forces had not been brought

into play by the Mighty Power and Wisdom of God, by which mountain chains were thrust up from beneath, and the different strata tilted up upon their shoulders, and brought thus within our reach? How plainly does the simple fact, that these things are, that they are thus most wisely ordered, and that Man alone, of all the inhabitants of the earth is made capable of using these its vast resources,—how plainly, I say, does all this prove to the reasoning mind that, whatever may be the case *hereafter*, whatever may become of the Earth, whatever creatures may be placed upon it in the ages yet to come, yet Man was *intended* from the first to inhabit this world in his own appointed time, and all the ages that have past, whatever else they have done, have done this also, to fit the Earth to be the home for a time and the working-place of Man.

How can we help standing still for a moment to gaze with awe upon these startling evidences of the Finger of Divine Providence, working even for us from the very foundations of the Earth,—of “His purpose and grace which were given us before the world began, but are now made manifest” by those glorious revelations of Modern Science! How can we help exclaiming with the Preacher of old in the Bible, but with a depth of meaning far beyond his,—

“Whatsoever God doeth it shall be for ever; nothing can be put to it, neither can anything be taken from it; and God doeth it that men should fear before Him,”—

should fear with that awe and reverence which becomes the creatures—ay, the children—of so Great and Blessed a Being, while we think of His Nearness to us, His Presence with us,—a fear not inconsistent with trust and love, but the best nurse and preparation for both.

But, if for Man’s bodily wants and physical progress the Great Creator has so manifestly provided, by storing up materials for all the arts of life within the reach of his energy and industry, how sure we may be that the same Divine Providence has also been working all along in the more immediate culture of that which is highest in our nature, that for which our animal part, our lower faculties, exist, which is intended plainly to rule over them, how sure we may be that due preparation has been made also for the wants of the spirit of Man? Must we not ascribe the long line of inspired prophets, illuminated seers, stretching through all historic ages, growing brighter and brighter as the world grows older, to the especial ordinance of God,—yes, and see too in the earliest signs that we can trace of the existence of *some* religious feeling,—as in the case of those primeval men of the South of France, who buried their dead with funeral rites, which showed that they had glimpses,

however dim, of a life beyond the grave,—must we not see in these too, I say, the tokens that the Father of spirits was even then beginning the work of teaching and training the spirits of men? Must we not believe that the whole wondrous scheme for the education of the race in the works and ways of the Creator,—the whole gracious plan for wakening by degrees the minds of men to “feel after Him, if haply they might find Him, who was not far from anyone of them,”—existed all along in that Infinite Mind, who sees the end from the beginning, and to whom all things are ever present? And has it not proceeded in a course of orderly development, not as human impatience, but as Divine Wisdom would have it, from the foundation of the world to the present day?—so that, as the apostle has it, “when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son,” or as He says in the text, “His purpose and grace”—

“was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but now is made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.”

The light which has flashed upon men’s eyes in various ages, in all parts of the world, was not meant to gladden them alone; it was a gift bestowed for the blessing of the race. The streams of heavenly grace and teaching, breaking forth in the beginning here and there in solitary places, have flowed as God has ordained into the channels which He has prepared for them,—the chiefest, mightiest river being the Christian Church, the company of those in every land, who draw their main lessons of life and doctrines from the recorded teaching of Christ and his apostles.

The gradual and orderly development of religious knowledge would be more evident, more clearly marked, in that race and people, to whom we owe our sacred scriptures both Old and New, if we had these older Scriptures in their original form and in their true chronological order, and were able to trace it more distinctly, from the first recognition of a Divine Being,—“ELOHIM,” the Mighty or Fearful One, yet still one among many such beings, of whom the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was supreme, ‘El Shaddai,’ God Almighty, ‘*the* Elohim,’ ‘the God of Gods,’—to the clearer view of “JEHOVAH,” the Living God, the God of Israel, to whom “there was none like among the Gods, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders,”—and then to the still later view expressed first

by the Deuteronomist, that "Jehovah He is God, in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is none else, there is none beside Him,"—as he says elsewhere—

"See now, that I, even I, am He, and there is no God with me: I kill, and and I make alive; I wound, and I heal; neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand."

But at present not only the Pentateuch and Book of Joshua, but the later historical Books also of the Old Testament, the Books of Judges, Samuel, and Kings, are made up of portions of very different ages, welded together, as it were, into one whole, but sometimes with a violence, which disturbs the course of the narrative, introduces discrepancies, and betrays in this way, as well as by internal differences of style, plain signs of a juncture. And in these different portions not only are the social and political circumstances of the people, in ruder and more advanced stages of their progress, mixed up confusedly together, but the religious ideas also of different ages are often brought into closer juxtaposition, so as greatly to confound our notions of the history of those early times, and of the course of development of the religion of Israel. And the great work of Modern Criticism, that of separating, as far as possible, those component parts of the Pentateuch and other historical Books of the Old Testament, which are due to different ages, acquires a value and dignity especially from this, that it is not only engaged in settling a literary question of the deepest interest, in reference to books of such paramount importance, but will also assuredly, when completed, help to throw much light on the whole question of the religious enlightenment and education of mankind.

Meanwhile, even in their present condition, it is a great thing that we have in these ancient books the archives of the present form of religion,—that, which rightly interpreted, harmonizes with the deepest desires and needs of the most highly and widely cultivated minds of this the oldest age of the world,—which produces or tends to produce the most perfect and beautiful human character. For the Christian Religion is a development of the Jewish—of the highest form of the Jewish Religion, not merely of that which was chiefly ritualistic and ceremonial, but of that which had been refined and spiritualised by the teaching of the later prophets, and perhaps in some way by becoming blended with other streams of religious thought, which had burst

forth in the life of other races from the same Divine Spring. Here then are the chief archives of that Divine Religion, which, when purged of its human accretions and reduced once more to its essential principles, as Christ taught it,—the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Man, the manifestation of the Divine in the Human through the Incarnation of the Living Word, through the Indwelling Presence of the Spirit, bearing witness with our spirits that we are all in very deed the sons of God,—will embrace, as we trust, at length, the whole human race. It is wonderful, indeed, that these should be contained in the history and literature of one small tribe, an otherwise insignificant people like Israel. But the Bible, the old Bible, which some accuse us of attempting to destroy, to set aside, becomes more wonderful, more worthy of note, more precious, when viewed as the work of men like ourselves, as a part of human history, than if each word of it were an infallible utterance from the Eternal Throne. It is as great on the first supposition as it is far too little and mean on the other. On the first supposition it commends itself to the reverence of the highest minds: on the second, it belongs only to those who are either unable or afraid to think.

The Apostle, then, speaks of the Gospel Message as the culminating point of God's dealings with men from the beginning, and of the whole past being a preparation for that which then was. God in His Wisdom, which we cannot fathom, but can only reverently endeavour to understand so far as it is revealed to us, has been gradually leading up mankind to a clearer fuller knowledge of, a greater likeness to, Himself. No light spiritual and moral could be clearer than that which the teaching of Jesus brought into the world,—no relationship of Man to God nearer than that which he expounded by word and deed, of sonship to the Eternal Father. Yet much collateral light, much knowledge, such as increased intimacy with the works of God supplies, has been granted to us since the Saviour trod this earth. Would *he* have taught us to turn away from it, to fear it or *despise* it,—fear or despise our birthright, as sons of God! It would be but a faithless cowardice—if not indeed a wicked folly—to do so.

The apostle tells us in the text that Christ—

“has abolished death for us, and brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel.”

The Gospel tells us that God is a Spirit,—yet not a Being to whom we in our littleness are indifferent, so that, because He is exalted, we on our low level are out of His Sight. It tells us that He is our Father, who cares for the least and meanest of us: and nothing can ever really be added to that message of glad tidings. Yet think what a wonderful insight into the nature both of God and Man is conveyed in those words, “the Father *seeketh* such to worship Him, who shall worship Him in spirit and in truth,” in the silent worship and reverence of the heart, or in the secret chamber where no eye of man beholds them. “The Father *seeketh* such to worship Him.” Does not this answer to our inmost needs? Do we not inwardly crave that the Highest should “seek” us, should care for us? We see all nature, all this glorious framework of earth and sky without a meaning, as far as our poor minds can reach, unless it is for man. Yet each individual lies helpless on Nature’s bosom, as it were, unable to alter on his behalf one law, one ordinance. All things serve man, indeed, yet only as the servants in a household serve the children, obeying not *their* will, but that of the Head of the Family. Jesus, however, tells us not to fear, for the very hairs of our head are all numbered. We are not as children left to the care of servants; for the Father rules over and cares for each and all.

Such teaching as this is the fairest nurse both of faith and virtue, forbidding the thought that we can escape our duty, our needful cross, our needful chastisement, it may be, yet assuring us it will not be too heavy or crush us under its weight. Such teaching was meant to work out in human creatures that fixed confidence in One above, that strenuous grasp upon the work of life, which is the very perfection of Man. It is the completion of that “holy calling,” which was given us in God’s gracious purpose in Christ Jesus, as the Apostle says, “before the world began,”—that is, there never was a time when He, to whom all things are ever present, did not contemplate the perfecting of His creature Man in His own likeness, and contemplate also, as the chief means to that end, the birth of Christ into the world, his teaching and that of his apostles,—expanded by the action upon it of all holy, God—directed minds through succeeding ages, and, as at the present day, flanked, as it were, supported, on every side, by the revelations of Science, which

aid us in adoring the mighty power, the glorious Wisdom, of our Heavenly Father. Still, whatever progress in Science, and even in social Science which bears upon morality, the world has made since the days of Christ upon earth, by him the Paternal Character and Spiritual Nature of God was first clearly revealed, and thence a bright light was thrown upon man's present and future destiny. In the language of the text, by him, and by the Gospel which he preached, were "life and immortality brought to light"—illuminated, brightened with light, or brought forward into the light, brought more within the sphere of our vision, above the horizon of our souls.

Not that the ages before Christ were without a hope beyond the grave. The apostle does not say this, and could not have said so, since even in the Gentile world we know such hopes were distinctly entertained,—not merely in the faint notions of another life which even the most savage tribes are not without, but in the clear distinct convictions of the "highest-mounted minds" in different ages, such as Socrates or Cicero. These hopes were kindled by the same good Spirit, leading God's children, through that twilight of knowledge, nearer to Himself. And "surely," they said, "the strong yearnings of the soul for some future existence which shall be common to all,—not a selfish wish, but the desire of a good in which all shall share,—is of the nature of a *prophecy*—a *promise*—from the Father of all. It is implanted there by the Author and Giver of that life of which it is a part: it is a promise therefore made by Him, and which he will not disappoint. Such are all aspirations after light and knowledge, after goodness and virtue, after a nearer approach to the Source of light and love. They came assuredly from Him who made us: yet how can they ever be fulfilled except in another and more advanced state of being than this?"

Such thoughts, or something equivalent to them, such hopes more or less defined, dwelt in the hearts of good men and true, lovers of God, within the Jewish Church, and without it, even before the coming of Christ. We find, for instance, in the Second Book of the Maccabees many passages which show that, in the age when that book was written, about 50 years B.C., the hope of another life was very strongly held among pious Israelites. Thus in the

account of the martyrdom of seven brethren under Antiochus Epiphanes, one of them says in his dying moments—

“Thou like a fury takest us out of this present life : but the King of the world shall raise us up, who have died for His laws, unto everlasting life.” 2 M.vii.9.

Another says—

“It is good, being put to death by men, to look for hope from God, to be raised up again by Him,” e.14.

And the mother herself cheers them to endure courageously their appointed trials, saying—

“Doubtless, the Creator of the world, who formed the generation of man, and found out the beginning of all things, will also of His own Mercy give you breath and life again, as ye now regard not your own selves for the sake of His laws. . . . For our brethren, who now have suffered a short pain, are dead under God’s covenant of everlasting life.” e.23,36.

It is not therefore in the sense of *first revealing* “life and immortality” to men, that Christ is here spoken of as bringing them to light, but in the sense of throwing light upon them, making more bright and clear what was more or less dimly seen before. And this he did by teaching us to look upon God as our Father, who by His spirit breathing in us assures us of His Fatherly love to us, and to look upon each other as members of one great Family, in which that Spirit is dwelling. In this way he has “abolished death” for us, and taught us to face all the dangers and difficulties of life in the free confiding spirit of children, simply going forward at our Father’s word in the path of duty, fearing no evil for He is with us, and the Everlasting Arms are underneath us. After entering in thus, through him as the door of the sheepfold,—having embraced with our whole hearts, as the living Truth, this his Divine Teaching concerning the Father, we can go freely “in and out, and find pasture.” We know that we are “saved” from all real harm, whatever troubles may betide us, being held in the embrace of Him who truly loves us, who is “the Saviour of all men, though specially of them that believe,” of them that have been blessed more than others to know, as we do, the grounds of our faith, and to enjoy our privileges, even in this world, as “sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty.”

“Not according to our works,” says the apostle, have we been saved, and “called with this holy calling.” Blessed be God for this word ! It is God’s free Fatherly Love that calls and saves us, not our own deservings. This world, indeed, is one for us of disappointment—of seeming failure—in respect of our very best intentions. Who does not feel

that his highest hopes, his most fervent aspirations, are ever falling far, far short of themselves, even when they seem to be accomplished,—when as far as possible for us they are accomplished? He who knows us better than we do ourselves, He who “is greater than our heart,” knows how far “our works,” our doings, fall short of our desires and our intentions. He knows it all. He placed us here in the midst of temptations, of alien elements, that they might form a whetstone, as it were, to the soul’s fine-tempered blade,—that we might, in the very struggle to attain the best, be weaned from, be sick of, ourselves, and cast ourselves, as helpless children, on the love and merey of our Heavenly Friend. “Not according to our works,”—but according to what He sees in us, according to that Divine Life which He Himself has implanted in us, having designed us for it, before He called us into being,—that Life, which is the Light that “lighteneth every man that cometh into the world.”

Not for thee, then, O proud Pharisee, who hast “fasted twice in the week, and given tithes of all that thou possessest”—not for thee, who supposest that thou hast “kept all the commandments from thy youth up,” and art in need of nothing,—not for thee only is this heavenly voice heard “calling”: though who indeed would not joyfully resign all that this world can give to be able to say that he had indeed kept unblameably that Divine, that Holy, Law?—*that* in itself were the blessedness of heaven, and not something to be recompensed! But God calls each and every one of us, sinners as we are, to His gracious footstool: He calls each one, who has ears to hear, to come and be His obedient child,—to follow Him as a dear child, who rests in his Father’s Love, and out of a return of filial love obeys His Will and Word.

Since our calling, then, our claim to be God’s children, rests upon that which we have in common with every other child of man,—since it is “not according to our works, but according to God’s purpose and grace” we are saved,—it is plain that *our* admission at the heavenly gate does not *exclude* any, but rather holds it open wide, for the least favoured in natural—yea, and in spiritual—gifts to pass through also. The Christian Church—that is, not those merely, who have a certain ecclesiastical constitution, or who hold certain creeds and dogmas, but those in every age

and land, who have drunk into the spirit of Jesus, that spirit of dutiful reverence and trust towards God, of tender pity and sympathy for Man,—the souls, that form the Church of the Living God, are the first fruits of His creatures, first ready and ripe to be presented to Him: but the rest of the harvest of the human race shall follow by and bye. Yes! “if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy.” Firmly or faintly, we still must “trust the larger hope,”—must trust—

that good shall fall
At last—far off—at last, to *all*—

that even the proud and selfish worldling, the dark and ignorant in Christian as in Heathen lands—*how* we know not, through what painful discipline, what prolonged training, what suffering, or what sorrows, we cannot guess or tell,—shall yet be brought in at last, when, says the apostle, “God shall be all in all,”—

“That God who ever lives and moves,”

and whose “purpose and grace, which was given to us all,” to the whole human race, “in Christ Jesus before the world began”—is surely working all things well, according to the good pleasure of His Will, is working with a view—

To One, far-off, divine event,
To which the whole Creation moves.

A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PETER'S, MARITZBURG,

On Sunday Morning, July 29, 1866,

BY THE

RIGHT REVEREND THE LORD BISHOP OF NATAL.

1 COR. x. 11, 12.—*Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*

THESE things, says the Apostle, “are written for our admonition, *upon whom the ends of the world are come.*” Many attempts have been made to explain away the obvious meaning of these words, and of many others like them in the writings of the apostles, so as to avoid the inference that they were mistaken in their views as to the immediate future. Thus the phrase, “the ends of the world,” has been taken to mean the Christian Dispensation, as the final and complete Revelation of God to His creatures. In one sense this, no doubt, is true, since nothing can really be added to that Revelation of God, as our Father, which is the essential Truth of the Gospel of Christ. But has nothing been added to brighten the glory of this Revelation? I do not say, any new feature,—but has no clearer light been thrown upon our conceptions of the Heavenly Father, since the Apostles’ time, from all that Astronomy, Geology, and the other kindred Sciences have taught us of the majestic immensity, the perfection of order, without exception, without caprice, which holds this boundless universe in one? Have we not learned that we must not impose our own limitations on the Divine Nature,—that, because love with

us in its most intense form is and must be partial affection, we must not ascribe partiality to God, nor yet deem that His Love is less for each of His children, because it extends to all?

But it is certain, as we have seen on other occasions, from many passages of Scripture, that the apostles, and especially St. Paul, did expect within their own lifetime the end of this world, of this system of visible, sensible, things,—that they did—

“look for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the Great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ,”—

the appearing to the bodily eyes of all mankind, in the age of men then living, of him who died upon the cross, and whom they recognised as King of things invisible. They believed that—

“The Lord himself would descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ should rise first; then they which were alive and remained should be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so should they ever be with the Lord.”

We know how entirely these expectations of theirs were disappointed: and to us, indeed, they sound most strange and fanciful; imagination labours with them in vain, and reason rejects them. And why? Because we are living in a far older stage of the world's history than those first Christians; because we are children of the 19th century, not of the first. We have our intellects enlightened, our souls expanded, by all the rich inheritance of knowledge which so many ages have bestowed upon us, of which indeed only a few of us can do more than appropriate the results. We ought no longer to be children in understanding; we ought to be men; we ought to be wiser than the men of that earlier time. And surely the Divine Educator of mankind, who is with His Church now as He was then, as He was before, and has been since through all the intervening interval,—surely He will require from us more, seeing He has committed more to our charge.

Our advance, then, upon the apostolic age in general culture makes it impossible for us to take the same views even with the apostles themselves on some matters. But besides this, as I have said, the lapse of time itself has confuted their expectation of a speedy end of all things. Ages have rolled on, and, for aught we can tell, ages will yet pass, before the purpose of God in the creation of man upon the

earth will have been accomplished,—enormous ages, it may be, like those which have elapsed already, since first the primeval savages lived upon earth. ‘Millenneums hence,’ for aught we know, the feet of men then living upon this globe will “be set”—

In midst of knowledge dreamed not yet.

There was a period, we know, when English lands were ‘covered with glaciers,’ and English seas ‘infested with icebergs,’ animals, which for long ages have been extinct, as the mammoth, the woolly rhinoceros, the cave-lion, and the cave-bear,—

ranged freely from the continent of Europe to England, at a time when there was uninterrupted communication by land between the two countries. Lyell, *Ant. of Man*, p.154.

Over those icy lands and seas, and amidst those extinct animals of the post-pliocene age, human beings were wandering, and have left their bones or weapons to mark the places where they lived or died. Who knows what changes Earth may yet see before the end shall come,—before there shall arise—

that crowning race,
Of those that eye to eye shall look
On knowledge; under whose command
Is Earth and Earth's, and in their hand
Is Nature like an open book?

In fact, the expectation of some immediate visible catastrophe could not be really and seriously entertained without paralysing the very springs of daily life, and stopping the whole social machinery. Accordingly, we find St. Paul advising his converts not to marry, not to acquire property, not to take a living interest in the affairs of this world,—

“for the time is short and the fashion of the world passeth away.”

And among his disciples, it seems, there were some, who, in the expectation of the speedy coming of Christ, were “disorderly, working not at all, busybodies,” neglecting the plain duties of life.

We need not in these days fear such consequences as these, except, perhaps, for a few enthusiasts. The real danger is of our having unrealities, falsehood mixed up in our minds, in our faith, with those things which we ought most surely to believe and to act upon. The danger is, lest the Coming of Christ, thus professedly but not really expected, should usurp the place of that vital truth, the actual presence of the Judge amongst us, unseen, but constantly

beholding our ways, "discerning the very thoughts and intents of our hearts." He is here even now: He is revealed continually, even manifestly, whenever order takes the place of disorder in the world, whenever justice is done and mercy shown, whenever humanity appears in its fair proportions, as it existed in the Divine Mind before the foundation of the world,—when God's "own purpose and grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." He decreed even then that His children should be "holy and without blame before Him in love." And we, according to what we truly are and do, are even now accepted by Him or repelled from His Presence. Indeed, if this Presence of God is unfelt by us, unreal to us, and we are looking for a gay picture in the clouds to bow our stubborn hearts, we may be sure that no such vision, could we even behold it, would have any purifying, sanctifying, effect upon us. "If we believe not Moses and the Prophets, we should not be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

But, besides a mistaken expectation of the future, the Apostles entertained the usual erroneous ideas of their age respecting the past. To them, doubtless, the story of the wanderings of the Exodus, with all its legends, was veracious history. They believed that these things were not only *recorded*—"written for our admonition,"—but really happened, just as they are described. We, in our day, blessed with the light of Modern Science, cannot so regard them. But what then? These sacred books are still the only literature of the Hebrew nation, given to them for their instruction, embodying under the form of myth and legend the most elevating thoughts of their most ancient writers,—thoughts which showed that God was near to them in the secrets of their hearts, that they recognised His Presence, that they loved, trusted, obeyed Him.

And this it is which makes their value for us. It is wonderful indeed to see how great an influence they have exercised upon human history,—these legendary tales of the early fates of an otherwise insignificant race,—how they form still the figurative language of all religious experience, our life is still a pilgrimge, death the passage of Jordan, Canaan our everlasting Home. The truth, on which our souls are fed, is "manna from above"; the influences of the gracious Spirit of God are streams in the desert, to refresh the weary wanderers; and the guidance vouchsafed to us on

our path of life is likened to the pillar of the cloud and of the fire, which led the camp of Israel. This, doubtless, may be accounted for in a great measure by the relationship in which Judaism stands to Christianity,—by the fact that it pleased God to graft upon the Jewish stock the Revelation of Himself by Christ,—the most human of all faiths, the union of the Human and the Divine,—the teaching concerning God of him who bid us say ‘Our Father,’ who showed forth to us in his life and death the spirit and character of a true Son—Son of Man, as well as Son of God,—a faith surely the most congenial, the most elevating to humanity, while it is at the same time the most humbling to the pride of the individual, since it requires each to take every child of man to his heart, to reverence in the meanest outcast a member of Christ, a child of God. It pleased God to graft this faith upon the belief of the Jew,—that belief itself being a message from the same God to mankind through Israel, though not so full and clear a revelation, or rather, we might say, a more partial unveiling.

But why should we resent the idea of Divine messages being conveyed to man, imbedded in myths and legendary stories? We might as well refuse to receive any instruction from the writers of other days, because their statements about nature and history require correction by the light of the present age. Yet it is no part of true Wisdom to despise the testimony of the past, provided that we “prove” it according to the Apostle’s advice, and “hold fast” only “that which is good” in it.

Some there are, indeed, who reject the message, whether Jewish or Christian, because they despise the messenger. “What are the Jews,” they say, “a narrow-minded tribe, without the varied culture of the Egyptian or the Greek, that they should teach us what to believe?” Or they object to Christianity, and its Divine Lessons of the Fatherhood of God, and the Brotherhood of all Men, as children of God, from a notion of the utter insignificance of the whole human race, when compared with the majestic works of God, much more of each solitary individual, an infant undeveloped, it may be, or an ignorant savage, blindly groping after truth. “What is Man,” they say, “when we learn to appreciate in some faint degree the immensity of this vast Universe? What is Man, the tenant of one single globe, and that but as an atom, amidst countless worlds and systems of worlds?

Can we believe that the glorious Creator of all these starry hosts claims kindred with a frail creature like this, whose "breath is in his nostrils,"—calls him His Son, and bids him listen to His Voice and lean upon His Bosom?"

Yes! we can. However crushing to the imagination is the immensity of the Universe, the Mind of Man has gone far out even to the utmost star. The Framer of all these mighty systems has given to this frail creature power to measure and to weigh the distant orbs of heaven. Yet the weight and the measure, the number and the size, of all material things is not to be compared in God's sight with one thought of love, one breath of prayer, one act of virtue. If we take only this globe on which we live, Man seems indeed, to judge by bulk alone, but as an insect on the face of it. "By the earth's crust," says a great living Geologist—

is meant that small portion of the exterior of our planet on which we are enabled to reason by observations at or near the surface. These reasonings may extend to a depth of, perhaps, ten miles; and even then it may be said that such a thickness is no more than a hundredth part of the distance from the surface to the centre.

We should not take the largest and strongest of the animals, the elephant or the buffalo, and call one single individual man, a rude savage or a speechless infant, insignificant in comparison with a countless herd of such animals. We feel at once that mere quantity is not—cannot be—precious in the eyes of Him who made the worlds. Animals may flourish and be at ease, in their pens or in a narrow pasture. But the whole world is not too large for Man, whose eyes ever rest upon the distant horizon, and whose sense of beauty and sublimity craves and feeds upon the earth's broken surface, the wide waste of waters, and the blue depths of heaven.

No! we will not refuse to listen to God's message to us because we are too mean and small to receive a message from Him. It is enough that our hearts answer to it, to prove that it was *meant* for us; for He made the "ear," with which we hear it,—not the bodily organ only, but the inward consciousness. Nor will we cast from us the teaching of the old Hebrew Scriptures, because it is mixed with much that is untrue, concerning history, concerning nature. If this displeases us, trained as we are in modern views,—if the rude habits of a primeval time, the customs of a pastoral race, the wars and tumults of a comparatively uncivilised people, their public and private sins, their impure and bloody

idolatries, their polygamistic practices, seem unsuited to edify the minds of Christians, amidst the life of the nineteenth century,—yet often in the history of the world has it been said of God's Messenger, "there is no form nor comeliness in him, nor any beauty that we should desire him,"—and just for this very reason, that the message might be received for its own sake, and for its own intrinsic value. In all things, then, it behoves us to endeavour to arrive at the truth, to discover that which *is*,—not what we should imagine ought to be or must have been, and seek to learn from it. So shall we find the use and meaning of all God's Revelations to us, whether by the mouth of the seers of Israel, or by the apostles of Christ.

As to the meaning and use of the other worlds which the midnight sky displays to us, we cannot even form a conjecture. Of those 'hundred million spheres,' we cannot say whether they are inhabited or not. We cannot doubt the *power* of the Creator to adapt the Planets of our system, or any other members of the starry host, to be inhabited worlds. He *may* enable animals and plants to live on the surface of Venus, screening them from the Sun's burning rays and glaring light by clouds which never allow them to get a glimpse of the central luminary. Or He may adapt their bodies to live with comfort in the cold, moist, dismal gloom of Uranus or Neptune. Or He may even fit them to live upon one of the minute Planetoids, whose attraction is so small that "a man placed on one of them would spring with ease sixty feet high, and sustain no greater shock in his descent than he does on the Earth from leaping a yard." All that can be said is, we have no reason whatever for saying that He really has exerted such a power. That body of the Solar System, which we know best, the Moon, we are almost sure has no inhabitants at the present time. Her surface lies waste and barren, like the streams of lava or of volcanic ashes on the Earth, or like the sand of Africa, where no blade of grass finds root. We can examine portions of the Moon's surface so small as a mile square: but no sign of change, no token of life, animal or vegetable, has ever been discerned in any part of it. It has no water, no air: in short, as a late eminent writer has said, it is a mere cinder, a world apparently burnt out, "a collection of sheets of rigid slag and inactive craters." It *may* have been once inhabited. But there is no sign to show that it was occupied

by living beings during the ages which have passed since man first lived upon the earth, or the ages upon ages which had passed before that event, since the earth itself came into being. It is possible, therefore, that the planets may be in the same state now. At all events, it is quite possible that they may not be inhabited by a race of *spiritual* beings like man,—creatures gifted with reason, conscience, will,—made in the very image of their God. For countless ages, for millions on millions of years, this Earth itself, we know, *was* in being, and yet no creature like man lived upon it. It *may* be so with the rest of the Solar System.

And those innumerable stars—are they inhabited? The two Magellanic Clouds, which are seen in our Southern sky, when viewed through powerful telescopes, are found to be of astonishing complexity. The general ground of each consists of large tracts and patches of nebulous matter, that cannot be resolved by the telescope, mixed up with separate Stars and clustering groups of stars. But, spread over this general ground, as it were, are nebulae in abundance of all shapes and sizes, globular clusters and nebulous objects, which are seen nowhere else in the sky. Within the larger cloud, there have been counted 278 nebulae and clusters, besides 50 or 60 more upon its borders. And each of these consists of glorious orbs, millions upon millions, each like our own Sun shining with its own light, and probably giving light and heat to its own troop of attendant Planets. Are these all inhabited worlds? We must speak here with reverence and bated breath, bowing our hearts before the all-adorable Majesty of the Great and Blessed God. We know not yet the meaning of these countless orbs; nor, perhaps, will it ever be given to man to know. But we cannot suppose that they were all made merely to give us light by night, when one additional Moon would give more light than all the Stars, or merely to exhibit to our gaze a grand spectacle for our wonder and adoration, when so few eyes can see the vast multitudes of the heavenly hosts, and so few can know the awful glories they reveal to us. But this we may be sure of, that in eye of Him whose Name is Love and Truth and Holiness, mere masses of matter, however vast, or multitudes of living creatures, however fearfully and wonderfully made, cannot be compared in value with *one living man*, with one spiritual being, such as we are, who can know God, and glorify Him with a pure and

loving service, which, beginning in this world, shall endure for ever.

Yes! the order of this mighty Universe must be beautiful in the sight of its Creator. We can fancy, as it were, the glorious orbs of Heaven singing for ever, as they go, in perfect harmony, a song of praise to their Almighty Lord. But let us ever bear in mind this fact, that the voice of one little child, that lisps with reverent lips the words of prayer, makes sweeter Music than this in the ears of its Father in Heaven. Let us be sure that the acts of willing, loving, obedience, which God witnesses in His children upon earth,—their faithful discharge of duty, their patience under suffering, their meekness under wrong, their selfsacrificing love for the sake of others, their efforts to overcome some bosom sin, their deeds of manly courage and brave resolve, in the maintenance of the truth, or in the defence of some righteous cause, it may be, even unto death,—such acts as these, which are the acts of *spiritual* beings, are more beautiful and blessed in His Sight, who is the Father of Spirits, than all the hosts of Suns and Stars in the Universe.

And though we cannot read the mystery of the heavens,—though we know not all the meaning of the Earth,—yet of this small globe, on which we live, we may surely venture to say, as was said last Sunday, that it was made with express reference to such a being as man. Man can scarcely be said to improve it, except for his own purposes: where population is thick, as in great cities, he may be said rather to infest it. But it is wonderfully fitted for the culture of man. What has been called the primal curse, was rather a special blessing,—the thorns and briars which covered its face, ages before the first man had sinned. For man's sake the earth was so made from the first, that toil and patience, skill and faith, are the very conditions of his existence on it. The sweat of his brow, in which he eats his bread, is health to him and virtue. Thus has God made the earth for His children, to educate them as spiritual beings.

But, further, He has raised up amongst them from time to time his prophets to speak to them in His Name, to call out that which is highest in them, by the communication of spiritual truths, of truths concerning Himself, His Nature, His Will, His Relationship to them. And therefore it is that the stories of the Old Testament, fictitious though they be in their external details, have taken such hold upon the

minds of men in all times, because they have been the media for conveying such truths. Then also the very idea of God, as supreme Lord and Lawgiver, not of individuals only, though primarily of them, but also of men in their capacity as members of a nation, and therefore as presiding over all their relations, social and political, is so true, so fruitful of instruction in all its details, that the story, which was modelled on it, which seemed to carry it out, to display it in action, to translate it into fact, was sure to commend itself to the religious faculty in man. It would be, in fact, a *true* story, even if nothing had happened as here related. For it represents the true relationship between God and every nation, realised in proportion to the enlightenment of that nation. It represents God to us as the fountain of authority, the author of law and order, the protector and Saviour of Communities, while they conform to His Holy Will, the refuge of the oppressed, the deliverer of the captive.

Some, indeed, who are more fond of using strong language than apt to weigh the meaning of their words, have denounced all myths and legends, all narratives constructed or filled out by the imagination, as 'lies, which savour only of the father of lies.' But this is surely a hard judgment upon these old writers, who collected the ancient traditions of their people, and, without our modern notions of accuracy or authorship, welded them into what they conceived a consistent and harmonious whole, fitted to promote the instruction of their people and their edification in the right ways of the Lord. Where, we might ask, is the *history*, which is the exact reflection of the living, the cited fact? Are the dry annals, in which names and dates and numbers are most carefully preserved, worthy of the name of true history? Do they convey the living truth to their reader? Or are they not to the actual truth what the skeleton is to the man, or the map to the face of Nature? No! a work of imagination, from the hand of genius, is more true, though what we should call pure fiction, than many ponderous tomes of so-called history,—especially when the latter is penned by one who, though scrupulously exact in his dates and names, looks with the dull eye of a partisan at the events he records, seeing only what harmonizes with his favourite notions.

We cannot, then, help seeing in the Sacred Literature of the ancient Hebrews a store of precious material for our use

as spiritual beings, laid up from age to age, under the guidance of God's Providence by the Inspiration of His Spirit; even as the Earth was built by the same Divine Wisdom, through all the ages that have passed, in which its various strata were deposited, some more, some less, precious, and the most precious not always pure and unmixed, but demanding diligence and even skill to bring them to light. The world has not outgrown the heaven-implanted Wisdom of the men of old time, and the things they wrote "were written for our admonition."

St. Paul sums up this subject with this conclusion—

"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Among those to whom he was writing, there were two classes who would be liable to directly opposite temptations in connexion with the subject on which he had been speaking. The Jew, who looked on the old Scriptures as his especial and most precious inheritance, would be hindered from using them aright by his idolatrous fondness for the letter. To him the oft-repeated formula of the Sermon on the Mount would be an offence, a stumbling-block:—

"Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time—but I say unto you," &c.

The enlarged and expanded morals of Christ's teaching, which were often even contradictory to the orthodox *expositions* of Scripture, would seem to them a slight and a reproach to the old Law. Their superstitious reverence for the Sabbath, against which he so plainly protested,—their minute observance of the so-called Mosaic ritual, for which the time and occasion had passed away,—would be the greatest hindrance to their continuance in the Christian Church, to their communion with their fellow Christians. The Jew—

"was confident that he himself was a guide of the blind, a light to them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and of truth in the Law."

He was sure that he himself was a member of the chosen nation, a child of God; and he was ready to say to others, "Stand by! for I am holier than thou."

On the other hand, the Gentile Christian, the convert from Rome or from Greece, might be repelled or offended by the intense nationality of the Scriptures, and unwilling to sit at the feet of the Jew, to whom in so many respects he was superior. With his higher culture, he would be

tempted to despise the Jew, and the Jewish teaching; and he thus might lose the edification and the comfort to be derived from the more spiritual parts of the Bible. We have been so nourished from our infancy on the words of the Jewish Scriptures, that we can hardly now appreciate the feeling of distaste which they were likely to inspire in the polished Greek or the proud Roman. But the same snare may beset us from a different quarter. It may do so: I do not myself feel it: the longer and the deeper my study of the sacred text, the more I prize it as an expression of the religious feeling and thought of devout men of those ages. Yet to those, whose studies have been in other directions, the Bible narratives may possibly seem too antiquated and remote from our present pursuits, from our modern doings, to be the guide and the help to us that they were to our fathers.

In either case, whether we indulge a superstitious reverence for, or a contemptuous distaste for, the Scriptures, we may suspect in ourselves a measure of selfwill and self-sufficiency. It is our part, I repeat, to look at that which *is*,—to accept gratefully and reverently what God gives us,—our Bibles on the one hand, the light of Science on the other,—to reject no light from eowardice or from indifference or indolence, but in such measure as the knowledge of the Truth is granted to us, to seek to walk in it.

“Whosoever shall do His Will, shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.”

Vainly do we dispute about religion, if we are not practising what we do know, be it much or little. Those, who think they shall stand either in the pride of their orthodoxy, or in the pride of their enlightenment, have need to “take heed lest they fall.

A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PETER'S, MARITZBURG,

On Sunday Evening, July 29, 1866,

BY THE

RIGHT REVEREND THE LORD BISHOP OF NATAL.

1 KINGS xix.9.—*And he came thither unto a cave and lodged there; and behold the word of the Lord came to him and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?*

IN the singular history of Elijah, which has been brought before us in the Lessons of to-day, we have a striking instance of the fact which we were considering this morning, that many things are recorded in the old Hebrew Scriptures, which cannot really have "happened," but which are yet under God's Providence "written for our admonition,"—are "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." When we think of the miraenlous acts heaped together in this one narrative, as having occurred under the reign of Ahab, the idolatrous king of Israel,—whereas not a trace of such phenomena appears in the sober history of even the most pious kings of Judah,—the ravens that brought the prophet day after day, "bread and flesh in the morning and bread and flesh in the evening," as he dwelt by the brook of Cherith during that terrible famine,—the barrel of meal that wasted not, the cruise of oil that failed not, at Elijah's word in the widow's house at Zarephath,—his stretching himself three times upon the dead body of the child, and raising it again to life,—his calling down fire from heaven, which—

"consumed the burnt-sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench"—

his lying down to sleep under the juniper-tree in the wilderness, and being touched by an angel, who showed him

"a cake baken on the coals and a eruse of water at his head," of which he twice partook, and—

"in the strength of that food went forty days and forty nights unto the Mount of God,"—

his calling down twice the fire of God from heaven, which came down and consumed the captains and their fifties, soldiers who were simply doing their duty in coming to summon him to appear before the king,—his smiting the Jordan with his mantle, and "the waters were divided hither and thither," so that they two—Elijah and Elisha—went over on dry ground,—and lastly his being carried away by—

"a chariot of fire and horses of fire, which parted them both asunder, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven"—

it is impossible not to see that all these are plainly legendary statements, which have gathered about the history of this great prophet, and, if historically true, would have made the age in which he lived the most extraordinary in the whole history of Israel, an age in which there was a most prodigious expenditure of miraeles, attended with hardly any result.

It may be supposed, indeed, that these accounts are only symbolical representations of actual facts. Thus the writer in the *Dict. of the Bible* says of the cake and the eruse of water, i. p. 527—

Whether we are to take the expression of the story literally or not, is comparatively of little consequence. In some way little short of miraculous,—it may well seem to the narrator that it could be by nothing but an angel,—the prophet was awakened from his dream of despondency beneath the solitary bush of the wilderness, was fed with the bread and water which to this day are all a Bedouin's requirements, and went forward 'in the strength of that food' a journey of forty days 'to the mount of God, even to Horeb.'

And Dean Stanley writes, *Jewish Church, 2nd Series*, p.322—

'And, as they still went on,' upwards it may be, towards the eastern hills, talking as they went, 'behold! there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder.' This was the severance of the two friends. Then came a furious storm. 'And Elijah went up in the tempest into heaven.' In this inextricable interweaving of fact and *figure*, it is enough to mark how fitly such an act closes such a life. 'My father, my father!' Elisha cried, 'the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!' Elijah had stood a sure defence to his country against all the chariots and horsemen that were ever pouring in upon them from the surrounding nations. So he now seemed, when he passed away, lost in the flames of the steeds and of the car that swept him from the earth, as in the fire of his own unquenchable spirit, in the fire which had thrice blazed around him in his passage through his troubled earthly career. According to the Jewish legends, he was at his birth wrapped in swaddling-bands of fire and fed with flames. During the whole of his course, 'he rose up as a fire, and his word blazed at a torch.' *Ecclus.* xlviii. 1. And, as in its fiery force and energy, so in its mystery, the end corresponded to the

beginning. He had appeared in the history, we know not whence, and now he is gone in like manner. As of Moses, so of Elijah—'*no man knoweth his sepulchre; no man knoweth his resting-place until this day.*' . . . The Ascension or Assumption of Elijah stands out, alone in the Jewish history, as the highest representation of the end of a great and good career, *of death as seen under its noblest aspect*,—as the completion and crown of the life which had preceded it, as the mysterious shrouding of the departed within the invisible world. By a sudden stroke of storm and whirlwind, or, as we may almost literally say of the martyrs of old, by chariots and horses of fire, the servants of God pass away. We know not where they rest; we may search high and low, in the height of the highest peak of our speculations or in the depth of the darkest shadow of the valley of death. Legend upon legend may gather round them, as upon Elijah: but the Sacred Record itself is silent.

And so the Jewish historian Josephus omits all mention of Elijah's 'Ascension,' and says, *Ant.* II. ii. 2—

At this time it was that Elijah *disappeared from among men*, and no one knows of his death to this very day. And, indeed, as to Elijah, and as to Enoch, who was before the Deluge, it is written in the Sacred Books that they *disappeared*, but so that *nobody knew that they died*.

Viewed in this light, we should have in the account of Elijah's disappearance an instance of what we were speaking of this morning, namely, of imagination being truer than history. The death of a great and good man, his removal from the scene of his earthly labours, is regarded by the devout mind not merely as a departure from the busy haunts of men, but as an admission into a higher state of being, a glorious Assumption into the Nearer Presence of God. As the Wise Man says, *Wisdom of Solomon*, iii. 2-4:—

"In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die, and their departure is taken for misery, and their going from us to be utter destruction; but they are in peace. For though they be punished in the sight of men, yet is their hope full of immortality."

But most of the other strange miracles recorded in the life of Elijah can hardly be regarded in this light. They must be reckoned among the legends which gathered around the story of that wild prophet of old, with his long shaggy hair, and the sheepskin mantle, his only covering, (various relics of which are still said to exist, one piece for instance, at Oviedo in Spain,)—legends such as that which Dean Stanley quotes of his being born in flames, or others which identify him with Phinehas the son of Eleazar the Priest, or with the angel of Jehovah that appeared to Gideon, or which say that the widow's child, whom he raised from death, became afterwards the Prophet Jonah, or which speak of him as certain to appear again before the coming of the Messiah. Yet "the thing which has been shall be." And, if we look into the history of Elijah as here recorded, without regard to these miraculous details, we shall find some striking

points of contact with the history of all times; we shall see that the writer was indeed a living man like our ourselves, under the teaching of the Spirit of God; and, whether in depicting the chief features in the life of this great prophet, he was following real facts of Elijah's history, which had come down to him, or whether, like any of our great modern poets he was drawing for some at least of his conceptions about him from the depths of his own imagination, we shall find that he represents most truly the actual facts of human experience, that, "as in water face answereth to face," so does the heart of this brother man of ancient days answer to the heart of man in our own times.

You will remember the circumstances under which the words of the text are supposed to have been spoken. With fiery zeal Elijah had carried out his great design in the reformation of religion in Israel, and had just slain at the brook of Kishon the four hundred prophets of Baal with the sword. This seems to have been the Tyrian Baal, the worship of which deity had lately been introduced in Israel by Jezebel, Ahab's Queen. The Sun-God, as we now know by the researches of modern enquirers, was the great deity revered by all the tribes of Canaan, and as such was called "the *Baal*," that is, 'the *Lord*' of the land. And the great mysterious name of this Baal, especially among the Syro-Phœnician tribes in the North of Canaan, is said to have been *Yakhveh*, "the Life-Giver," almost identically the same with *Yahveh*, the name of the God of Israel, which we pronounce improperly in English "Jehovah." Both these names, in fact, are expressed by ancient Greek writers, both Christian or Heathen, by the very same three letters, IAO. Whether the Israelites made use of this name before their entrance into Canaan, or derived it from the tribes with whom they there came in contact, it is impossible to say with certainty. My own opinion, for various reasons which I have elsewhere stated, inclines to the latter view.

But this, at all events, seems to be clear from the records of the Bible itself, that the worship of this Syro-Phœnician or Syrian Baal prevailed extensively in Israel long before the introduction of that of the *Tyrian* Baal by Jezebel. We read, for instance, in the Book of Judges, in various passages, ii.12,iii.7,x.6, that the children of Israel—

"forsook the Living God, the God of their fathers, which had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them,—

that they—

“served the Baalim and the Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines.”

Among these miscellaneous deities, it is hardly possible that they should not have worshipped the Great Syrian Baal. And, in truth, it seems most probable that this is what the common people did, when they worshipped ‘Jehovah,’ instead of worshipping the Living God, the God of Israel, whom their great prophets were continually exhorting them to serve and fear. In Josiah’s time, we are told, there were actually in the very Temple of Jehovah at Jerusalem “vessels made for the Baal, and for the grove, (rather, the Ashera, an image constantly coupled with the Baal, and worshipped with impure rites,) and for all the host of heaven,” 2K.xxiii.4: there were houses for the degraded beings who ministered to these vile orgies, “that were by the House of Jehovah, where the women wove hangings for the Ashera,” v.7; there were “horses that the kings of Judah had given to the Sun,” which stood “at the entering in of the House of Jehovah,” v.11. And these things, we must remember, were allowed to stand by the *good* king Josiah, till the seventeenth year of his reign, though some years before this Jeremiah had begun to prophesy in Jerusalem. It seems plain that in the popular mind this unhallowed worship was offered in the name of Jehovah, though they did not recognise Him with their great prophets as the Living God, the God of Israel, but still thought of Him merely as the Sun-God, the Baal of Canaan, the Lord of the land. And this is confirmed by our finding that they burnt their infant children in the fire for burnt-offerings unto the Baal, which, says Jeremiah repeatedly, in Jehovah’s Name, viii.31,xix.5, xxxii.35, “I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind,” as if they had represented that Jehovah required such offerings at their hands. And he adds, “they came into this place,” that is, the Temple, “with the blood of innocents”: they “have set their abominations in the House which is called by My Name to pollute it”: while Ezekiel exclaims, xxiii.39—

“When they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my Sanctuary to profane it; and lo, thus have they done in the midst of My House.”

This worship of the Syrian Baal, then, seems to have long prevailed in Israel, from the time of the Judges, having

been probably adopted by them, soon after their entrance into Canaan. The people had been long accustomed to this: it had thoroughly rooted itself among the institutions of the land. And though the common people seem to have practised their impure rites and bloody sacrifices within the very Temple precincts, and apparently as part of the worship which they paid to Jehovah, yet the devout men in Israel all along, enlightened by God's Spirit, were always striving with these idolatrous tendencies, seeking to abolish these vile abominations, and to raise their minds to right conceptions of Jehovah, as the Living God, the God of Israel. We may illustrate the state of things in Israel, perhaps, by what we know to be the case now in countries where the lowest type of Romanism prevails with all its degrading superstitions, as in Spain or Naples, where the Virgin seems almost to have usurped in the popular mind, not only the place of Jesus as Mediator, but the place of God. Yet the worship in such cases, however debased and in fact demoralising, is still meant as the worship of God. And devout minds, who might be raised up by Divine Providence for doing a work of reformation among such a community, would seek, as Josiah did, to clear away the corruptions which had defiled the worship of God, to cleanse and purify, if possible, the existing system of religion, rather than to abolish it.

But it was very different when a new form of idolatry was introduced by Jezebel, the worship of her own national deity, the Tyrian Baal. It was the Sun-God, like the Syrian deity, but regarded from a different point of view, and served with different rites. Against this worship, which the Queen seems to have enforced with all her influence, Elijah raised his voice and exerted his energies. He is first introduced as appearing suddenly before Ahab, and announcing that there should be no dew nor rain in Israel for some time to come, but according to his word. And so a dreadful famine raged for three years; the heaven above was like iron, and the earth beneath brass, and the fountains and brooks were dried up throughout the land. This is spoken of by St. James as brought about by the prayer of Elijah:—

“Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are; and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months: and he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.”

This, in fact, is represented as Elijah's device for bringing the people to a better mind. He would show the power of the Living God in giving or withholding rain at His prophet's word. And then, when they were humbled by this long and sore affliction, and Ahab himself and his steward Obadiah were going different ways throughout the land, in search of grass for the perishing horses and mules, Elijah appears once more before the King, and summons him to collect "the prophets of the Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves (or Asheras) four hundred," and "all Israel" with them unto Mount Carmel. You heard read this morning the account of this transaction,—how Elijah taunted and mocked the prophets of Baal, while they prayed to their God to send down fire upon their sacrifice, and how they "called on the name of Baal from morning even unto noon," and, "when midday was past, until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice,"—but "there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded." Then Elijah made his prayer to the Living God, and the fire came down, and consumed the sacrifice and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench around the altar:—

"And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces, and said, 'Jehovah, He is the God! Jehovah, He is the God!' And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them; and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there."

With our view of this narrative, that it is merely legendary, not historical, we are not perplexed with considerations as to the probability of Elijah, having slaughtered, at one time, if not with his own hand, these 450 human beings. But we notice that the 400 prophets of the Asheras were *not* killed on this occasion. Dean Stanley says they "seem to have shrunk from the contest." But surely we can scarcely think that 400 men would have shrunk from the contest with *one*,—that they would *all* have done so,—when all the 450 priests of the Baal attended. Mr. Scott says, in his Commentary (on 1K xviii.40)—

'The 400 prophets of the groves' were not present on this occasion. Some learned men think that they were Zidonians, not Israelites; and therefore their attendance had not been insisted on, or they had refused to come.

But Elijah had expressly desired that these also should be summoned,—'the prophets of the Baal 450, and the prophets of the groves 400,'—and immediately it follows,—

"So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered *the prophets*—not 'the prophets of the Baal' only—unto Mount Carmel."

It seems plain, then, that the 'prophets of the groves' were also supposed to have been summoned, and to have been present on this occasion. And yet they were not killed with the others. What was the reason of this distinction? It seems to me that it must lie in the fact that the "prophets of the Baal" were the prophets of the new religion introduced by Jezebel, while the "prophets of the groves" were the prophets of the old religion, of Jehovah regarded not as the Living God, the God of Israel, but merely as the Lord of Canaan, the God of the land. Accordingly we find these very same 400 'prophets of the groves' spoken of shortly afterwards as 'prophets of Jehovah.' For when Jehoshaphat visited Ahab, and the latter begged the pious king of Judah to go up to war with him, we are told that—

"Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, 'Enquire I pray thee *at the mouth of Jehovah* to-day. Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about 400 men, and said unto them, Shall I go against Ramoth of Gilead, to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, 'Go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king.' And Jehoshaphat said, 'Is there not here a prophet of Jehovah besides, that we might enquire of him?' 1K.xxii.5-7.

Accordingly, Mr. Scott notes on this passage:—

It is most probable that these were the prophets of the groves, who escaped when the prophets of Baal were slain at the command of Elijah. No doubt, they commonly prophesied in the name of Baal, or of some idol; but it seems that occasionally they could speak in the name of (the LORD) Jehovah. . . Like some modern philosophers and poets, they perhaps could argue that it was all one, whether the Supreme Being was called Baal, or Jehovah, or Jupiter. To accommodate themselves therefore to Jehoshaphat, and to show that they were not bigots, but men of candour and liberality, they would for once prophesy in the name of Jehovah.

And so Dean Stanley speaks of them as—

four hundred prophets of Baal, yet evidently professing the worship of Jehovah, and Israelites, not foreigners,—possibly the 400 prophets of the groves who escaped destruction at Carmel. *Jewish Church, Second Series*, p.316.

It can scarcely, I think, be doubted that the story before us means to represent Elijah as *not* dooming these prophets of the groves to death, and that the writer of the narrative saw nothing strange in this. Are we therefore obliged to suppose, as has been said of late, that Elijah wished this lascivious worship to strike its roots deeper and yet more deep in the land? We need suppose nothing of the kind. But here, as I have said, was an old *national worship*, the rooting out of which may have been felt to be more difficult than the extirpation of the new idolatry, which had only just been introduced. Elijah may be supposed to have postponed his grand attack upon it, till he had seen the effect

of his first stroke, or to have even indulged the hope of purging by degrees the National worship, and reforming it into a more pure and spiritual religion.

Elijah's great experiment, however, had been tried, and to all appearance tried in vain. Baal's prophets had been slain: but this only provoked the anger and nerved the arm of their patroness Jezebel.

"And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time."

It must seem strange that she had no fear of the fire of the Lord which had come down from heaven, and devoured the sacrifice, and might in like manner at any moment be brought down upon herself by Elijah's prayer. It must seem still more strange that he, who had shown hitherto so resolute and brave a spirit, as to face undaunted the whole 850 prophets, and slay 450 of them,—who had himself called down the fire upon the sacrifice, and who is described as afterwards again and again summoning to his aid the same terrible power,—

"'If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume thee and thy fifty,'—and the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty,"—

should now have been thoroughly frightened, and run away in a spirit of *impatience*, *fear*, and *despondency*, to hide himself in the wilderness from the fury of an angry woman. But these miraculous details we may pass by: the real essence of the story, the truth which it embodies for us, lies not in these. It is enough that, as we have heard this evening,—

"When he saw that, he arose and fled for his life, and came to Beersheba, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree, and he requested for himself that he might die, and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers."

Then on he went to Horeb the Mount of God, and there, as the text says,—

"The word of the Lord came unto him, and He said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword: and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away."

And you remember how the story tells us of the Lord "passing by,"—of the wind, the earthquake, and the fire; but the Lord was not in these:—

"and after the fire a still small voice."

And again a voice came to him, "What doest thou here Elijah?" Again we have the same mournful, desponding, reply: and then he is sent back to his work with the comforting assurance—

"Yet have I left me seven thousand in Israel"—that is, a large indefinite number, unknown to thee, but known to Him who seeth in secret,—"all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him."

Let us briefly now draw a few lessons from Elijah's story.

(i) And here, first, we notice the *earnestness* and zeal of the prophet as here depicted. This is that "spirit and power of Elijah," in which, as our Lord tells us, John the Baptist came. He, who can behold oppression of any kind, whether of the tyrant king or of the tyrant priest, whether over the bodies or over the souls of men, and not lift up his voice, and forget all else, is not a prophet after Elijah's stamp. He may be a thinker: he may be a teacher of the few. He may be wise and prudent for his own little personality, making the best of this world for himself, steering cautiously amongst the prejudices and interests of men, so as not to make enemies, so as even to do some good to a small circle: but he is not an Elijah. Often in the history of the world the denouncing prophet has arisen, who calls to repentance, and tells both high and low that they have forgotten God. His mission is one out of many proofs that God does not forget man, but is seeking him and drawing him to Himself. The Elijah of every age is not so much the channel of new light to men concerning God, as the rekindler of an old torch, with a strong arm holding up that torch against the darkness in which men have hidden themselves.

Yet Elijah must have deeply meditated on and truly realised the facts of the Being of Jehovah and of Israel's relation to Him, for his soul to have burnt within him as it did at the sight of Israel's idolatries, of Israel's corruptions. He must have loved his fellowmen and adored his God, to have been carried away by his feelings above the fear of the king, beyond all laws and maxims of conduct, in order to bring his fellowcountrymen back to a sense of their highest duties, their most glorious privileges. Doubtless, one such as he must have appeared a madman in the eyes of the wise and prudent of that generation; as Festus counted Paul "beside himself," and all Elijahs have been deemed mad by their companions. We, however, will admire and love them for

that sacred frenzy, even though we deplore many of their acts, and by no means propose all their conduct for our own imitation.

(ii) For, secondly, we must notice the *impatience* betrayed in the history of Elijah. We remember how Jesus, when some of his followers desired to imitate the acts of Elijah, and call down fire upon those who did not receive him, rebuked them by saying, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of:" whereas of John the Baptist, who came indeed in the spirit and power of Elias, burning with his zeal, yet suffering himself, instead of inflicting suffering on others, he said, "among those born of women there hath not arisen a greater prophet than he."

But the same intense desire for any object, however high and holy, which carries a man beyond all personal considerations, is apt to make him somewhat selfwilled, and impatient of the state of things which seems to him bad,—forgetting that God rules, that nothing is but by His permission, that if He suffers evil for a time, though we are to do what we can to remove it, what we can is to be measured by what we ought, and that He at the right, the fitting, hour, will sweep it away with the breath of His mouth. Having God Himself our Father, as Christ's Gospel teaches us, for our 'Fellow-worker,' while our whole energies may indeed be nobly employed, we may leave the results to him.

Luther, the Elijah of modern history, did not dream of exterminating his opponents by the sword, of gaining the victory by physical force. It is true, he was betrayed at times into violent language and denunciations of his adversaries, as haters of God and emissaries from the bottomless pit, which imitated in their way the earthquake, the storm, and the fire, and were all unlike the 'still small voice,' the voice of truth, which is the voice of God, which does not appeal to fear, to passion, to interest, whether in this world or the next, but to the reason and conscience of man. In fact, whatever apparent and temporary victory even truth may seem to have gained by outward force, by slaying false prophets or burning heretics, will be apparent and temporary only; for truth addresses the hearts and consciences of men; and no amount of outward violence can compel them to believe, to love, to pray. "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God:" and all outward *shows* of worship are valueless in themselves, to His eyes,

who seeketh spiritual worshippers alone. Religion, the life of God in man's soul, is like one of those trees which increases not from without but from within. Compulsion, outward restraint, like an iron band round the stem of such a tree, will either be broken or will destroy it.

(iii) We notice, thirdly, Elijah's *weakness*, his *fear*, his *despondency*. The notion, which he expressed in the words, "I only am left, and they seek my life to destroy it," was a natural consequence of that fiery zeal, which had carried him so far out of the usual course, so far out of the co-operation of his fellow-believers. In the hour of hoped-for victory, that feeling of loneliness, of his being one man against the world, may have even been a stimulus to his spirit: it was too much for human weakness to feel himself alone in defeat.

Elijah, however, was mistaken in thinking himself alone. He, who speaks the truth, is not really alone amongst men: for the Father is with him. The same voice, which bids him cry aloud, is speaking in the hearts of many; rather, but for prejudices of various kinds, it would be heard in the hearts of all. What, indeed, is one man's conviction, however well expressed, unless it meets with an echo in the hearts of others? But for this, the Elijahs of every age would have been, as Luther said of himself, a 'voice and nothing more.' They would not have left the mark which they have upon the history of their age and nation.

Not for himself only, but for the cause which he had at heart, the cause of God, the cause of true religion, Elijah trembled and despaired. But can anything destroy true religion? Need God's soldiers fear ultimate defeat? How-ever long the night, the winter, of the world may be, must not the daylight dawn, the summer come, at last? If for this cause we were sent into the world, as our Lord by his own example teaches us, that we might "bear witness to the truth," surely the human race, as a whole, was called into being for the very same end,—namely, that God might be known, not merely worshipped in a vague superstitious way, but glorified, and the truth might fill the earth as the waters cover the seas. The mistakes, the want of wisdom, in men, as well as their moral shortcomings, may seem to delay that blessed issue. But it is in higher hands than theirs, even in His who sees the end from the beginning, who formed not Israel only, but all the family of Man to show forth His Praise.

We might here draw a parallel, or rather exhibit the contrast between the denouncing prophet, the Elijah, and the Son of Man, of whom it was written, that "he did not strive nor cry, neither was his voice heard in the streets,"—who said of himself, "I came not to judge, but to save," who said to the guilty, "Neither do I condemn thee," while yet he added, "Go and sin no more,"—whose teaching was chiefly positive, the pure revelation of God the Father, the only exception to the mildness of his words being those which dealt with the most strict religionists of the day, under whose specious disguise his Divine insight discerned self-exaltation, self-righteousness, hypocrisy. And, when those cutting rebukes had brought upon him, as they were sure to do, his own destruction, he resisted not, nor yet despaired: he knew that he was not alone, that the Father was with him. He knew also that the work of Him who sent him, the work which was given him to do, was one which not all the "contradiction of sinners against himself" could thwart, could overthrow,—that he conquered in dying. And from that day the Cross has conquered and will conquer. Not violence—the powers of this world, whether money or influence amongst the great of the earth,—will shape the faith, will sway the hearts of our children and our children's children,—but the truth concerning God calmly spoken, and the patience of those who speak it, to suffer whatever man is allowed to inflict, because God permits it.

"Art thou he," said the idolatrous king to the solitary prophet, "art thou he who troublest Israel?" O healthful, life-giving trouble, which the voice of one man, shaking the dry bones, breaking the deadly lethargy of his people, could occasion! How, indeed, unless in that solitary voice the Eternal Truth of God was speaking, could it have moved the deep repose, the stately pride, of a king and nation worshipping in pomp and with one consent the idols they had chosen? Idolatry, however, is a weed ever springing up afresh in human nature,—the instincts of worship in man ever going astray to sensible objects. Surely in this age, when Science has laid bare so far, so deep, the springs, the foundations, of all things, showing Law and Order, one Law everywhere, that is, many laws harmoniously blended, nowhere capricious action, as of some inferior but un-subjugated power, it will be impossible for men in their

devotions to stop short of the One Living God, Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, the Only Wise God, our Saviour.

We may not indeed yet hope for so blessed a result. The multitude knows little or nothing as yet of Science, and their religious teachers even dare to warn them against it, taking advantage of some misinterpreted words of the New Testament, which speak of "science falsely so called." And such will ever be tempted to idolize the mere accidents of revelation, the teacher from whom they receive it, the book by means of which it is conveyed to them. But ever—at least, in later ages of the World—when idolatry has spread and grown, a voice has gone forth against it, perhaps from some despised, rejected messenger; and it has withered and fallen, "cut down without hand," thrown aside as an incubus, a hindrance of human progress, cast out as a diseased product by the healthy action of the living frame.

A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PETER'S, MARITZBURG,

On Sunday Morning, August 5, 1866,

BY THE

RIGHT REVEREND THE LORD BISHOP OF NATAL.

1 COR.xii.3.—*Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed, and that no man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost.*

No man speaking by the Spirit of God saith, 'Accursed is Jesus!' 'Jesus is Anathema!' Dean Stanley notes on these words, *Corinth.* p.222:—

The words 'Jesus is Anathema!' 'Jesus is Lord!' were probably well-known forms of speech. 'Jesus is accursed!' would be the test of renouncing Christianity, either before the Roman tribunal, [as Pliny speaks of 'cursing Christ,' *Ep.x.97.*] or in the Jewish synagogue, — probably the latter, if one may judge from the word Anathema. 'Jesus is the Lord,' would be the form of professing allegiance to Christ at baptism, as Peter 'commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord,' 'they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus,' *Acts x.48,xix.5.*

This indeed appears, as I have said on a former occasion, to have been the original form of baptism: it is the only form which we meet with in the Acts or the Epistles. The first disciples were baptized 'in the name of Jesus Christ,' *Acts ii.38.*—'in the name of the Lord Jesus,' *Acts viii.16, xix.5.*—'in the name of the Lord,' *Acts x.48*; they were baptised 'into Jesus Christ,' *Rom.vi.3*, or 'into Christ,' *Gal.iii.27*. This was apparently the simple form, by which converts in that early age were admitted into the Christian community, pledging themselves to receive Jesus Christ as Lord, to obey his word, to follow his example, to carry out in their lives the principles of love to God and love to Man, which he in his life and death had set before them.

Thus the general meaning of the apostle in the text is thus. No man can deliberately reject Christianity, the Divine Lessons which Christ taught, the grand truths which he proclaimed in the ears of men, and do so under the influence of the Spirit of God. And, on the other hand, no one can be a true Christian,—can acknowledge in heart and life Jesus Christ as Lord,—can discern the beauty of his character, the brightness of his example, the excellence of his teaching, the preciousness of that everlasting Gospel, which he published to the sons of men,—without help from the Divine Teacher, without having been born again from above, without having had his mind enlightened and his heart quickened by the gracious influences of the Spirit of God.

A new power was in the earth in those days, new in the sense of being ever-living, everlasting, yet eternal, coming forth fresh as the morning light, the light of a day which had never yet beamed upon the weary, longing eyes of the spirits of men, from the Fountain of Light. The Spirit of God was moving on the face of the troubled waters of the world that then was. A message to the sons of men was sounding in their ears from their Creator, saying, "Come, and I will receive you, and be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

The Jewish Nation, who ought by their long antecedent training to have been especially ready to receive the message, were too generally ready to reject it, because they had made their privileges their idols, and thought more of their own rights, as God's chosen, than of Him who chose them. The Gentiles, too, had their own idols of another class, power, majesty, and dominion, pleasure, or knowledge, whether as in the minds of the multitude represented by Jupiter and Mars, Minerva or Venus, or in the minds of the philosophers regarded as the properties and glories of human nature. Thus among both Jews and Gentiles the great majority rejected Jesus, and his pure and spiritual teaching; they disdained to sit at his feet; they sought no fellowship with him. For them Jehovah's Servant "had no form nor comeliness; and when they saw him, there was no beauty that they should desire him." And not only Christ himself was thus rejected, but Christ's true followers,—those who felt that in him they had found not a Teacher only, but a Lord and Leader, one who had brought them near to God,—those to

whose hearts his word had penetrated, had come with power as the Living Word of God, to whose eyes he had manifested in his pure and loving life the grace and glory of the Father who dwelt in him,—those who in receiving him and his Divine teaching had received the Father, and in fellowship with him had realised their own relation to God as children,—such as these, like their Master, were despised also and rejected. Their very presence forced unwelcome truths upon the attention both of Jew and Gentile. It told the one that there was an inner shrine, into which he, as the son of Abraham merely, had not yet been admitted; it told the other that all the traditions of his forefathers, and the superstitious fancies of his people, were but the vapours of the brain,—that he had yet to learn the highest wisdom from an obscure son of a despised people. And we know too well how history teaches us, in very many bloody pages, that the disciples of Christ were not “despised and rejected” merely, but persecuted even to death, and that these formulæ, ‘Jesus is Anathema!’ ‘Jesus is Lord!’ represented to them, in numberless cases, escape from or exposure to cruel sufferings, according as they uttered the one or the other.

Let us be thankful that our lot has fallen on other and better days. Some, indeed, are almost ready to complain that all Christian heroism, and all occasion for it, has passed away out of the earth, except in the case of a few devoted missionaries, and look back with a sentimental regret to the time when the Christian Faith flourished high and strong, watered by the blood of martyrs. But let us consider what is involved in this killing to do God service,—what black dense ignorance among the masses of men, what savage and brutal fierceness, what utter misconception—failure, as it were—of Christianity amongst the most influential and most highly cultivated. And, remembering this, let us be thankful that the Gospel of God’s Grace and Love, working silently “like leaven” through society, through both its higher and its lower strata, has produced so great and blessed a change as we see in our day. Some, perhaps, will ascribe this change to the inevitable growth of the human mind—to the “progress of the intellect.” And this is, no doubt, partly true. But the progress of anything is the result of its nature, and its nature is *the gift of its Creator*. And thus, together with the intellect, the moral and spiritual part progresses and develops too, according to the Will of

the Father of Spirits, — progresses and finds its highest development in the clearer recognition of the meaning and truth of the Gospel, the glorious Gospel of the Blessed God, the Message of Life which He has sent us by our Lord Jesus Christ, by his Divine Teaching concerning the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man.

But, though for us the lions are dead, and the fires of Smithfield are no longer kindled, the words of the text are still full of meaning. We have now, as then, "pure religion and undefiled," the simple teaching of Jesus, presented to us, to accept it or to reject it. And many there are who do reject it, as of old. We have around us still the Gentile and the Jew: in other forms their spirit still survives.

Without attempting too close a parallel, we might say that the faith that cleaves tenaciously to the myths, which gathered round the cradle of Jesus, and which assumed such portentous proportions in succeeding ages, when they even took the colouring and many of the incidents of decaying Pagan superstitions, — that this mythical traditional Christianity, of which Rome is the only logical goal and climax, represents in this our age the old ancestral faith of the Roman Empire. Look back into the Middle Ages and see how the person of the Jew was abominated, how the Mahometan was hated, — how the terms heretic, infidel, miscreant, that is, misbeliever, were bandied about by the professors of this traditional faith, as if to depart from the ancient creed, to doubt the prevailing dogmas, to enquire into the truth of doctrines hoary with the rime of centuries, to abandon superstitious errors which age had made venerable, were a crime of the deepest die, a crime against the State as well as against the Church.

But we need not look back into the Middle Ages, nor at the Church of Rome exclusively. The spirit of Paganism exists abundantly even in this our day within the Church of England, — nay, has been rapidly growing of late, and acquiring fresh strength, within her pale. Too many of her children are looking back fondly to superstitious folies, to masses, ceremonies, priestly influences, mysteries, excommunications, — are renewing the practices of days which we once supposed gone by for ever. When we find such instructions as these contained in 'Anglican

Directories^{*} for the use of clergy of the Church of England in this age—

The greatest possible care should be taken that no single particle remains in the Paten;—

If any of the consecrated contents of a Chalice falls upon a linen vestment, the part must be washed over a Chalice, by a person in Holy Orders, and the ablution reverently poured down the piscina; and if they fall on a vestment of silk or stuffs, the part must be carefully cut out and burnt, and the ashes disposed of as above;—

If the Eucharist hath fallen to the ground, the place where It lay must be scraped and fire kindled thereon, and the ashes reserved beside the Altar;

Also, if by negligence any of the Blood be spilled upon a table fixed to the floor, the priest must take up the drop with his tongue, and the plane of the table must be scraped, and the shavings burnt with fire, and the ashes reserved with the relics beside the Altar;—

what is this but mere Paganism? Those who practise these rites are offended at the pure and simple Gospel of the Love of God to Man declared to them by Jesus Christ, calling the sinner to Himself, and promising the aid of His renewing, sanctifying Spirit. They crave more food for their sensuous fancy, both in their creed, and in the worship which belongs to it, than the teaching of Jesus supplies. They must make idols of the material form, the mortal body, of the Lord, of his mother, of his companions,—even of the accidents of his birth and of his death,—calling upon the “thorns and cross and nail and lance,” the wounds, the vinegar, the gall, the reed, to satisfy their spirits, to fill them with love, to plant in their souls the root of virtue and mature its glorious fruit. (*Hymns Ancient and Modern*, No. 96).

On the one hand, then, this Pagan system exists in our midst, seeking to withdraw us from the pure religion which Christ taught, from that worship of the Father in spirit and in truth which Christ enjoined and practised. On the other hand, we have still the one superstition which was the growth of the Reformation in the 16th century,—one, but the parent of many others. I mean the superstitious reverence for the Bible, for every word between the two covers of the Book, like that of the Jew for the letter of the Law,—that slavish subjection to the mere letter of Scripture, which forbids us almost to investigate its history and origin, or even its true grammatical meaning, and often leads men to acts and principles of conduct in direct opposition to the spirit of it,—

* These passages are extracted from *Notitia Liturgica* at the end of the “Union Review Almanac” for 1865, and from the *Directorium Anglicanum*. See note appended to this Sermon.

a blind faith, which would hardly indeed have a definite creed, without the aid of that tradition, which those who hold it professedly repudiate. With such as these the Bible is too sacred a book to be touched,—as if the greatest reverence for our God and King, zeal for His honour, love for His name, did not imply, did not require, the most jealous, the strictest, most searching, scrutiny of any message professing to come from Him to us! As the Jews, while they clung tenaciously to the Law of Moses, believed that they were doing God service by rejecting Christ and his Divine Teaching, so many who make the Bible their idol reject often in blind zeal the very essence of Christianity, and violate the whole spirit of Christ's teaching, while they profess to honour the Written Word, and reverence the Name and the Person of Christ. As with Jewish superstition, so, too, with Jewish exclusiveness, and Jewish severity of judgment, they pass censures upon those who are casting out devils in Christ's name, but are following not with them,—who take wider, nobler views of God's Gospel of Grace to Man, and of the nature and end of His Revelations to His children. And they know not what spirit they are of; they do not perceive that they are sinning against Christ himself by their uncharitableness.

But not from such notions alone, whether Jewish or Pagan, does it arise that so very many in these days turn a deaf ear to the message of the Gospel of Christ. Many, as the apostle said, "have not the knowledge of God." To many the very words of the Gospel are unknown, or, if they have reached them, they have glanced aside, without conveying any clear meaning to the soul. The good seed has fallen on the beaten highway, where there was no soil for it to root in. Ignorance, in fact, is one of our mightiest spiritual foes, the foe of our race, against which we are unceasingly to fight. No ray of light, no scrap of knowledge, is to be despised. But all God's gifts, coming from every quarter, are to be thankfully received by us, as "good and perfect," coming down from heaven, from the Father of lights, and as all meant by Him, if rightly received by us, to make our pathway clearer towards our Home.

But there is another kind of ignorance, which prevents very many from welcoming the glad tidings of great joy as contained in the Gospel, which leads to their rejecting Christ, and that is the ignorance of prejudice, because they

confound Christ's holy religion, his pure simple teaching concerning the Father, with the mass of traditionary matter which has been heaped upon it,—because they have been solemnly told by Bishops and Divines innumerable, that, if Moses did not write the Pentateuch, there is no Gospel at all for man,—that there is no Revelation from the Father of spirits to His children upon earth, if the whole series of legends and legendary history, in which the early religious teaching of the Hebrews lies imbedded, are not regarded as the sacred infallible utterances of the Holy Ghost. By the maintenance of such a dogma many have been, and still are repelled, from Christianity, are prevented from acknowledging Jesus as Lord. As Dean Milman has said, *Hist. of the Jews*, p. xxxiv—

If on such subjects some solid ground be not found, on which highly educated, reflective, reading, reasoning men may find firm footing, I can foresee nothing but a wide—a widening—I fear, an irreparable—breach between the thought and the religion of England. A comprehensive, all-embracing, Catholic, Christianity, which knows what is essential to religion, what is temporary and extraneous to it, may defy the world. Obstinate adherence to things antiquated, and irreconcilable with advancing knowledge and thought, may repel, and for ever—how many, I know not,—how far, I know still less.

Others again there are, who reject Christianity, and disregard the teaching of Jesus, because the pure and living spirit of his Gospel condemns some cherished vice in them,—because their hearts are too proud to receive the many whom they despise as their brethren and sisters in Christ,—because they shrink from the Cross, from admitting the duty of labouring, and, if need be, of suffering, for their kind. May God in His Mercy, by the operation of His Spirit, by sharp pains, if need be, bring down that pride, soften that hardness, and purify that corruption, till those, who are “enemies in their minds by wicked works,” accept with joy the light and easy yoke of the Son of Man. But let us beware of ascribing to any such causes the difference of opinion which makes our brother reject *our* view of the Truth—reject Christianity as we present it to him. *His* view may be imperfect, defective, erroneous; it may be meagre or superstitious; and yet his heart may be more pure than ours, and thus he may be nearer to the Vision of God than we are.

All these causes, however, may and do combine to hinder the spread of the Gospel of Christ. Superstition may be present at the same time with unbelief; a willingness to accept, and in some sort even to hold tenaciously, whatever

notions our ancestors have transmitted or our religious instructors have taught us, may coexist with a large measure of unbelief as to the existence of any real object of worship, of any real revelation from Him. Such a state of mind betrays itself in men by a nervous apprehension, lest they should hear anything to cause them to doubt, lest they should discover their religion, which they cling to with a certain affection and the tenacity of habit, to be after all untrue! Such persons really reject Christ and the teaching of Christ, when they anathematise the truth itself, as coming to disturb old notions and prejudices,—when they rage with a frantic violence against any who enter upon investigations, which lead them out of the beaten high road. When such as these appeal to terror, and warn against tendencies and consequences, instead of investigating calmly, reasoning justly, and speaking the truth in love, they not only show a want of living trust in God, as the God of Truth, but they virtually cease to recognise him as Lord, who says of himself—

“For this cause was I born, and for this end came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.”

But, if the Truth to which Jesus bore witness, Christianity pure and unadulterated, is, as we believe it to be, a message from the Father of spirits to our spirits, it will surely find an entrance into every heart which is taught of God, which waits and longs for His teaching, which is saying daily, ‘Speak, Lord! for thy servant heareth.’ And the true recognition of Jesus as Lord, of his word as our law, will be in a life conformed to his precepts,—a life of love to God and Man, of charity and meekness, of purity, of zeal for truth, of patience with those who are, or whom we deem to be, in error. One lowly follower of Christ, whose daily life is a constant reference to the Will of the Father, who bears his cross, his daily burden, without repining, who rejoices to do and to suffer for others dear to him, and for all or any as dear to God, is a stronger proof of the reality of the Gospel, than a thousand volumes of wearisome controversy. And no man can do this, says the text, except by the Holy Ghost,—except by virtue of that spiritual life, which he has received as a child of God.

But he who regards Christianity, and uses it in this practical manner, as a law of life,—to regulate the heart, the hands,—to bridle the tongue,—will have his moral sense

so heightened and quickened, that he will feel the presence of the Spirit of God, wherever there is anything "true or honest, just or pure, lovely or of good report, wherever there is any virtue, wherever there is any praise." He will rejoice to recognise any such good thing, wherever he sees it, even amongst those without the pale of Christian teaching, even amongst those who differ with himself ever so widely,—to recognise it as the fruit of God's Spirit, as coming from the Author of every good and perfect gift.

How would it enlarge our hearts habitually to to this, and, whenever we see in any measure the likeness of the pure and loving Son of Man, to recognise the work of the Holy Spirit of God, the evidence of that Kingdom of God over the hearts of men, of which Jesus spoke under so many figures, which he was commissioned to announce, to set up, in the world! How would it support us in the toil of life, under the weight of our daily cross, to remember that the desire we are conscious of to do that duty, the readiness to bear that cross, come from the good Spirit of our God, the same Spirit which was given to the Christ freely, 'without measure,' by which he finished the work which the Father gave him to do.

"No one can say that *Jesus is Lord* but by the Holy Ghost." We see, then, that the essential point in a true Christian is not to have a strictly orthodox creed, not to have a clear and accurate conception of mysteries which pass the comprehension of men, of the nature of God, of the nature of Man, of the nature of Jesus himself, but to acknowledge him as Lord,—to submit our hearts to that blessed teaching which he brought us from the Father,—to draw near daily, as he has taught us, with child-like reverence, but yet with childlike trust, to our Heavenly Father,—to follow him, who has gone before us at God's command, diligently, lovingly, patiently, in the path of self-sacrifice, of humility, of labours for love's sake, of care and tenderness towards the weakest of the flock, the helpless and lost, those who have wandered far away. But in this day particularly one feature of our Lord's life, which we must strive to copy, each in his measure, as God shall give us opportunity, stands out in special relief, as it bears a special relation to the circumstances which distinguish our own times. To 'bear witness for the truth,' as we have heard, was what even at his last hour he declared to be the end and object of his

whole life. To the assaults of his enemies upon his character, to what regarded himself personally, he answered nothing; when reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not. But he spoke to the last—even to the unsympathising, unappreciating, Roman Governor—of himself as a king, though over a heavenly and spiritual kingdom, as a king over the hearts of men, as one to whom his followers would say, ‘Lord, Lord!’—many who would not do the things which he said,—others, those ‘that were of the truth,’ who would ‘hear his voice,’ and follow in his train.

And we, too, if we “say that Jesus is Lord,” and say it in all sincerity and truth by the power of the Holy Ghost, shall feel ourselves bound, as his subjects and soldiers, to witness, as he did, for the truth of God against the falsehoods and vain traditions of men, however venerable by age or backed up by authority. We shall speak what in our hearts we believe according to our light to be the *actual fact*; we shall stand by those who do the same; whether men will hear or whether they will forbear, whether they account us foolish or even mad for so doing.

“The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.”

The following are additional extracts from the “Directorium Anglicanum”:—

“The Priest must not think, but know for certain that he has the appointed matter; this is, wheaten bread and wine (mixed) with a modicum of water. Of the wine and water he will be able to be certified after this fashion. Let him test it by his minister, who will taste both the wine and the water; but the priest himself ought not to taste it. Let him pour a drop upon his hand, rub it with his finger, and smell it; so that he may be the more certified. He must trust neither the mark upon the cruet nor the colour of it, since both often deceive. He must see that the chalice be not broken; he must look to the wine. If it is corrupted, he must in no wise celebrate; if it is not sour, he must in no wise pass it by. If it is too watery, he must not use it, unless he knows that the wine exceeds the water; and in every case where there is a doubt, either in regard to the sourness or the mixture or the excessive thickness of the wine, whether it can be used, we counsel the priest not to use it; because in this Sacrament nothing must be done concerning which there is any doubt, where most explicitly it is to be said, ‘Hoc est enim corpus meum,’ ‘Hic est enim calix sanguinis mei.’ Let him also see that he offer the oblations conveniently, and that he pour out the wine discreetly because this Sacrament ought to be appreciable by the senses, to be seen, touched and tasted, in order that the sense may be refreshed by the *species*, and the intellect be nourished *ex re contentâ*.”

Again, before Mass the Priest is to be careful that he—

“do not wash his mouth or teeth, but only his lips from without, with his mouth closed, as he has need, lest perchance he should intermingle the taste of

water with his saliva. After Mass also, he should beware of expectorations as much as possible, until he shall have eaten and drunken, lest by chance anything should have remained between his teeth or in his *fauces*, which by expectorating he might eject."

The following are from the "Divine Liturgy," a Manual for the Altar Office: edited by the Rev. Orby Shipley.

"O Holy Flesh of Jesus Christ
Upon the Altar lying,
Last gift of the Incarnate Word
Before His precious dying,
O living Bread of Angels bright,
Who wrought'st Redemption's story,
O hope of each one named from Thee,
We give Thee thanks and glory.

He gave unto the twelve
That which should feel the Cross;
They ate and drank the Giver,—He
Nor suffered change nor loss.
And ever since that day
(Who may the wonder tell?)
The faithful eat of Christ, yet He
Abides unchangeable.
Whoever eats and drinks
Aright, shall perish never;
Whoever eats and drinks amiss,
Shall dwell in death for ever."

O Holy Jesus, we believe
That Thou art present here;
With heart and soul we surely know
Our dearest Lord is near.
For though Thy Blessed Presence is
Not visibly revealed,
Faith tells us in these sacred forms
Thou art indeed concealed.
On bended knee then let us pray
That Thou mayest be adored,
For aye in Thy dread Eucharist,
O Thou most gracious Lord.

